

CARILLONS VERSUS CANNON: GARDENS VERSUS GUNS

BY HENRY CHARLES SUTER

SOMETHING significant, if not startling, has happened on two occasions of international interest. Although the event has been broadcast in each case to the uttermost parts of the earth, yet the specific incident seemingly has been missed by most folk.

In the first instance, it had been dramatically arranged and duly announced that a salute of guns was to greet His Excellency the Governor-General of Canada as he sallied forth to open the Imperial Conference at Ottawa, but the guns were silent, and instead the beautifully toned carillon in the Memorial Tower sounded out its melodious music on the summer air.

None seem to know whence came this change of plan, but it is conclusive that the thing was unprecedented in the history of the Dominion. Possibly this change in project came to someone in a sudden flash of inspiration, that the raucous crash of cannon would create an incongruous accompaniment to such an occasion, but it gave many great cause for gratitude that the carillon of bells was heard rather than cannon with their booming.

In the second instance herein mentioned, it has been recorded that on the international boundary line south of Boissevain, Manitoba, dividing Canada and America, a Peace Garden has recently been dedicated. The words inscribed on the cairn standing upon the international line read thus: "To God in His glory we two nations dedicate this garden and pledge ourselves that as long as man shall live we will not take up arms against each other."

There certainly could not be a more complete renunciation of war than those words convey. While it might be contended that we cannot claim such a project must continuously bind both nations, it can be conceded that both countries are convinced it were better to be making gardens, rather than manning guns.

But then have we not contended that in all the decisive campaigns of history, something more than material forces have been at work, something more than big battalions to be reckoned with? In estimating the character of a statesman recently a writer referred to the fact that so-and-so had not been a marked success, because all the problems of politics to him were wholly material problems,

never moral or spiritual and were to be solved solely by material forces. Surely that is enough to account for any man's failure!

Have not all past wars shown us how useless gunfire is? Heavy ordnances have pounded away for months with precious little effect. All history points to the uselessness of material things as powers for peace or paths to prosperity. How puny have the forces of iron bars proven; how futile tortures; and useless inquisitions? The truth is that armies are not strength, for Acre and Waterloo tell it; the flames of Kremlin and the solitudes of Fontainebleau show it; and the plains of Picardy have proven it.

One honest man or one wise man often commands millions, and that without a baton, sword, or charger. Why! the historian tells us that William the Silent won a subject from the King of Spain every time he took off his hat. Curtesy is better than cannon; bells better than official bluster; and grace succeeds where guns are sure to fail.

Even Napoleon knew another way to victory other than by force of arms, for he used to say "When you can use the lightning, it is better than cannon."

The suggestion is that there are other forces than war whereby we are able to strike fear in the heart of a foe, which are much more expeditious and effective. Mechanical contrivances may be useful in a way, and artificial implements serviceable now and then; but if you want to do something effective, lightning is the thing.

It is a reminder that the great forces of life are invisible, not tangible; moral, not material; spiritual, not temporal. We may continue to argue, "Who won the war?" Personally I think it was our mothers. Moreover it will be our women who will save us from another. Yes, all this seems a far cry from the fever for warships; the amassing of armies; the forging of guns; and the gauging of gasses. But in the light of the knowledge of these two incidents recording efforts for peace, we are not so helpless as it seems. "More things are wrought by prayer than this world dreams of," sings the poet, and quiet and gentle influences have been brought to bear upon some of the greatest issues of national and international importance that some day will astonish the world. Remember a pint of oil every half an hour thrown upon the roughest sea is sufficient to smoothe the water and to effect the rescue of passengers from a sinking vessel to another safely. God can still perform wonders with humble workers associated with Him. There must be humble dependence,

not on "reeking tube and iron shard," but upon the unseen and eternal forces, by national righteousness and individual waiting upon God. By belief in the beauty of holiness and the glory of prayer.

Life for the individual or for the nation is not a question of fierce conflict; nor of severe struggle; nor fields of blood; nor yet preparation for war. At least it is not for the church, therefore let us have done with the idea and settle the question for ever.

At least for the church it is a question of waiting upon God: cleansing the moral vision; kindling spiritual fire; and listening for the command of the great captain, the prince of peace, the son of God.

Surely at last as intelligent people, we should forsake the crude and crass notion that everything the community does in a national, official or patriotic way has to be accomplished to an accompaniment of military display, and a splurge of the symbols of war.

Our militarists, mostly for mundane reasons, may be determined to perpetuate these warlike principles and practice such army customs, but common-sense people have recently demanded a change and they are gratified that on these occasions of late, that carillons have been heard instead of cannon; and gardens have been seen instead of guns.

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